

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DOHA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0557

INFO USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L DOHA 0697

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR QA SA

SUBJ: AMIR OF QATAR'S VIEWS ON NEW SAUDI LEADERSHIP

1. DURING JUNE 12 CONVERSATION WITH AMIR OF QATAR, SHAYKH KHALIFA BIN HAMAD AL THANI, I ASKED AMIR FOR HIS VIEWS ON NEW SAUDI LEADERSHIP BASED ON GOQ'S PARTICULARLY CLOSE TIES WITH SAG. AMIR'S PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE AND HIS RECENT MEETING WITH KING KHALID AND OTHER TOP SAUDI LEADERS IN DAMMAN.

2. KHALIFA REPLIED THAT HE VIEWED NEW SAUDI TEAM AS COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP, WHICH APPEARED EFFECTIVE. HE SAID HE FOUND IT GENERALLY MORE OPEN THAN IN DAYS OF KING FAISAL, FOR WHOM HE HAD RESPECT AND AFFECTION BORDERING ON REVERENCE. AMIR NOTED FAISAL'S PREOCCUPATION WITH FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SAID THAT HE BELIEVED PRINCE FAHD HAD ASSUMED MOST OF RESPONSIBILITY IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS FIELD. HE SAID IT WAS HIS OPINION THAT SAUDI FOREIGN POLICY ALREADY MUCH LESS RIGID THAN IN FAISAL'S TIME, AND HE CITED SAG INITIATIVES TOWARD PDRY, KUWAIT AND IRAQ.

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HOWEVER, ACCORDING AMIR, HE HAD CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT SAG

WISHED TO PLACE PRINCIPAL EMPHASIS ON INTERNAL AFFAIRS IN FIELDS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL LIBERALIZATION. AMIR APPLAUDED THIS EMPHASIS AS NEEDED AND TIMELY AND IMPLIED THAT THESE AREAS HAD BEEN NEGLECTED UNDER KING FAISAL.

3. COMMENT: KHALIFA WAS MOST COMFORTABLE IN FAISAL'S SHADOW, AND WE SOMEWHAT SURPRISED BY HIS CRITICISM OF THE LATE SAUDI MONARCH. IT CLEAR THAT KHALIFA PERCEIVES THAT SAG IS SHIFTING GEARS AND THAT HE MAY HAVE TO RUN A LITTLE BIT FASTER HIMSELF TO KEEP PACE. ALTHOUGH HE APPARENTLY APPROVES OF SAUDI NEW LOOK, WE BELIEVE HE WILL BE MORE SENSITIVE TO CHARGES THAT HE BLINDLY FOLLOWS EVERY SAUDI LEAD. HIS REVERENCE, AND THAT OF MOST QATARIS, FOR KING FAISAL ENABLED HIM TO BRUSH OFF SUCH CRITICISM, BUT HOWEVER CLOSE HIS TIES TO NEW SAUDI LEADERSHIP, HE MAY NOW FEEL FREER AT LEAST TO MAKE SHOW ON OCCASION OF SOME INDEPENDENCE FROM SAG.
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